

JAN 29 1964

m. 2,055,266
S. 3,157,103

FOIAb3b

Front Edit Other
Page Page Page

Date: JAN 29 1964

ONLY HUMAN

By Sidney Fields

CPYRGHT

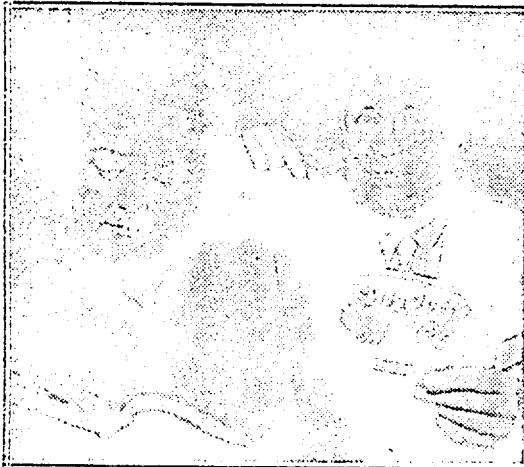
"Silly" Success Story

When Peter Hodgson put a putty-like substance nobody wanted into a plastic egg and launched it as a toy for adults his friends and well-wishers shook their heads in deep doubt.

"Man, get yourself committed," they advised him, "before you damage yourself."

Peter now has a five figure yearly income and a \$5-million-a-year enterprise that he built from the gooey stuff nobody wanted. His wife, Margaret still finds this incomprehensible. At which Peter shakes his head, goes "tsk-k tsk-k" and says:

"She should really know better. She once



Peter and Margaret Hodgson

worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. But I never question her too closely about her life as a spy."

"The reason all this success from a lot of gupp is so puzzling to me is because I was once in the toy business myself," says Margaret. "But I'm willing to accept all the ease and comforts from it without any arm twisting."

They live in a hilltop house in Madison, Conn. Their favorite exercise is viewing the view of Long Island Sound through a big telescope or communicating with the children—by phone. Peter Jr., 26, teaches at Yale and is taking his Ph. D. there; his two daughters, Nancy and Molly, both university graduates, are both married and each has a child.

He's Self-Educated

Peter himself, now 47 and sporting an explorer's beard, never went beyond the third year of high school.

He's from Norfolk, Va. When he left school he went into the Navy, spent most of his hitch polishing the bright work on the ill-fated Arizona, now a memorial and tourist sight in Pearl Harbor. After the Navy he was variously an ad copy writer, a market researcher, and the planner and statistician of Wendell Willkie's bid for the presidency. In 1949 he went to work for an ad agency

in New Haven that folded in six months. Peter took over its one remaining account.

"A toy shop run by a lady named Ruth Fallgatter," says Peter. "She was looking for adult toys and one day she showed me this gooey gupp that a friend of hers, an engineer at General Electric, had given her. It was a waste product from silicon compounds GE was using in an effort to find a source of rubber."

Is It Gum, Rubber, What?

Pete fingered the stuff. He stretched it. It was like gum. He dropped it and it bounced like a ball. He hit it with a mallet and it broke into a lot of pieces. He molded it back like clay, pressed it against a comic and it picked up the picture.

He suggested that Ruth Fallgatter make it a toy for adults. She didn't think much of the idea. So he made it himself, put it in a plastic egg, called it silly putty and in his persuasive way got it into the Doubleday bookshops.

"One manager reported that it was the biggest thing to hit the shops since 'Forever Amber' and 'Peyton Place,'" Peter says.

To add to his joy the kids started grabbing it from the adults.

"Then I got a barrage of letters from the parents because the stuff stuck in Johnny's dungarees and Mary's curls," he says. "We changed the gupp so it won't stain or stick."

Two years ago he thought he had some kind of a nut on the phone when the voice said it was the State Department and would Peter want to send his silly putty to Russia and maybe it would be best if his son took it there.

"It was no gag," Peter says. "The State Department was sponsoring a plastics show in Russia and they thought silly putty would lighten it up and show we do things for fun here too. They found out my son was taking his Ph. D. in Russian so they thought he should take it over. He did and it was a hit."

The Japanese Are Convinced

Peter recently returned from a trip to Tokyo where he convinced the Japanese they ought to have his gupp too.

"Japan introduces all their things here," he says. "So I thought, why not introduce something of ours to Japan? I'm going to make it there."

His plant in North Branford, Conn., which employs 125 people, makes and sells over five million silly puttys a year. He's sold a total of 32 million here, in every major European country, in India and South Africa.

"The gupp," says Peter, "is now an international celebrity."